



2006 Blog

21 December 2006 - Early Planning for Next Season?

Christmas is just around the corner and many people will be looking forward to the festive season and a few days break from routine. But why not try to take a little time out next week (if you can!) and do some early planning for your butterfly outings next season? After all, 2007 is also just around that same corner!

For those planning to visit sites in Hampshire, whether they represent local journeys or longer ones, I hope this website will prove useful, with over 30 good butterfly sites listed and more detailed features on a dozen of them. Within reason I am happy to provide further advice for those planning visits next season to these sites, since I know from experience a little "insider knowledge" can make a big difference to the enjoyment and success of a visit – just use the contact form to contact me.

I am also reasonably familiar with a few sites outside Hampshire which I have visited during the last three years, mainly to see species which are not found locally or are scarce. These include:

- Arnside Knott (Cumbria): High Brown Fritillary, Scotch Argus & Northern Brown Argus
- Meathop Moss (Cumbria): Large Heath
- Kidsty Pike (Cumbria): Mountain Ringlet
- Lankham Bottom (Dorset): Marsh Fritillary
- Powerstock Common and Old Railway (Dorset): Marsh Fritillary & Wood White
- How Hill (Norfolk): Swallowtail
- Collard Hill (Somerset): Large Blue – public site
- Thrift Wood (Essex): Heath Fritillary
- Wheelers Bay (IoW): Glanville Fritillary

Again, I'm happy to provide advice on these sites from personal experience - but note that for some of the above species, these are not necessarily the best sites, just ones I happen to know.

I am starting to plan for next season myself of course, and hope to visit a few sites which are new to me, both in Hampshire and further afield. I am also trying to include one or two which are reasonably accessible by public transport (green sites if you like!) so doing my bit to minimise dedicated car journeys – but it's not easy finding them! By the way, on this theme, Arnside Knott – surely one of the best butterfly sites in UK, is accessible by train, with High Brown Fritillary and Scotch Argus to be seen within 15 minutes walk of Arnside station!

1 December 2006 - 100 Butterfly Species Locally!

Over the last few days I spent some time browsing European butterfly websites (several run by "Expats"). It's always interesting to compare and contrast what's been happening this year just a hop away, in global terms, on the near continent.

For instance in one diary which focuses on the Rhône Département in eastern France, 114 species were recorded during the 2006 season, including some sightings from elsewhere in France. When you consider that the species list of France is around 250 butterflies, with many Départements, especially in the south, having well over 100 species, it is easy to see how credible this is. Indeed a link to another diary from this same web-page reported almost 200 species seen during the year, albeit from travels in 4 European countries.

As if species abundance wasn't enough, another report also from France suggested that 2006 was surely the year of - wait for it - the Purple Emperor. It was the commonest species in some woodlands in one area in the south of France – and on one occasion more than a dozen were seen jostling for the best position on one particularly evil smelling mound of – well you know what!!

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Returning to the Rhône Département itself, the species list contains mere 93 entries and there are many familiar names of course, such as Brown Hairstreak and Duke of Burgundy, as well as several very unfamiliar species to us, such as the Map Butterfly, whose spring and summer generations look completely different, and the beautiful Scarce Swallowtail. Some species like the Bath White and Large Tortoiseshell are present there but are now extinct in UK (or very rare migrants). Then there are several which are clearly closely related to UK species, such as the Cleopatra – very similar to the Brimstone, and the Western Dappled White – similar to the Orange Tip, but without the orange wing flashes in the male.

The Rhône list also has a few notable absentees (i.e. species found in UK and indeed in Hampshire which are missing from this particular area of France) including two of our fritillaries – the Dark Green and Pearl-bordered. The White-letter Hairstreak is also missing, but the similarity with the Sloe Hairstreak is striking. So too the Scotch Argus is absent, but you would be forgiven for mistaking the Piedmont Ringlet for one! These are just a couple of examples of closely related species found across the channel, which have taken slightly different evolutionary paths to our own indigenous species. They are not found in UK either because their habitat and climate requirements are not suited, or they are simply unable to spread and colonise the UK because of our island status, having 'missed the boat' at the end of the last ice age when the English Channel was formed.

So whilst much of Continental Europe is far richer than UK for butterflies, due to the warmer climate and relative abundance of butterfly habitat (bearing in mind the much lower average population density), for me this only serves to reinforce the need to preserve the diversity and distribution of our indigenous UK species. It is also interesting to note that many species are also declining in Europe with similar problems being cited as the cause, such as habitat loss and climate change – the effects of which in S Europe include desertification, one phenomenon which we are not likely to see in UK, at least not for a very long time!

9 November 2006 - Members Day and Who Says the Season is over?

It's members day for Butterfly Conservation (Hampshire & IoW Branch) on Saturday afternoon (11th Nov) at St Barnabas Church Hall, Winchester. I'll be there, although not perhaps for the AGM part, so you will be able to give me feedback on the website in person or on anything else butterfly related, during the break and mingling session!

I have just been looking at the local branch website and I am amazed at the butterfly sightings still being reported from the county and the South Coast. Whilst the species being reported are not that unusual for November, it is the quantities which are really surprising for this time of year. For example sightings in NOVEMBER include:

- At Boscombe, 59 Clouded Yellows with egg-laying activity
- Around Gosport
 - 3rd brood Small Whites including mating pair
 - 4th brood Small Coppers
 - 3rd brood Holly Blues and a 3rd brood Common Blue
- Several reports of Red Admirals and Painted Ladies in significant numbers (more than 10)
- Occasional reports of Peacock, Speckled Wood, Comma and Brimstone on the wing

Who says the season is over? - and if the global warming trend continues we might be organising butterfly walks to help work off the Christmas Dinner! Joking apart though, we must also consider how many species will have been lost also as a consequence of climate change - and you will notice that many of the species benefiting seem to be the more vigorous generalist species, not the more vulnerable specialists.

7 October 2006 - Mixed Fortunes at Keyhaven

For probably my last butterfly outing of the 2006 season, I visited the Lymington-Keyhaven nature reserve this afternoon - and there was great excitement there. Third generation of Wall Brown perhaps? Well actually no - but it was due to an even rarer species in these parts - an American Plover on Keyhaven Marsh - presumably well off course from its planned migration route. Anyway many "twitchers" were there, probably from all over UK, with lenses trained!

I guess a third generation of Wall Brown (if there were any) is probably over now, brought to an abrupt halt by the heavy rain during the week. So my single butterfly sighting of the afternoon? - a male Brimstone in flight on the path north towards Pennington Lane, behind the marshes.

I will now return to an activity with a more predictable success rate - updating the photo galleries and adding a few more site features over the coming weeks!

30 September 2006 - A Few Reflections on the 2006 Season

One might well argue that I am being a little too hasty in attempting already to summarise the 2006 Hampshire butterfly season – after all there are several reports from around the county of second generation White Admirals on the wing, as well as more usual autumn butterfly sightings. These include pre-hibernators such as Comma, Red Admiral, Peacock and Brimstone, 3rd generations of Small Copper and Speckled Wood, and not forgetting migrants such as Clouded Yellow which are now gravitating southwards, undecided whether to attempt a return migration to the continent.

So the 2006 season looks likely to continue well into October and possibly beyond, and this in a season where the main part was actually compressed into a shorter period than normal - and by that I mean from the first emergence of spring butterflies, such as Duke of Burgundy, to the main summer generations of species such as Dark Green Fritillary and Purple Emperor through to Silver-spotted Skipper and Brown Hairstreak. In a matter of fact way, the pattern of the season can be explained by a late spring (at least by recent standards) followed by a prolonged very warm, dry spell during June and July and now an unusually warm September.

In isolation, none of these facts is particularly remarkable, but when considered as a whole and in the context of the trends shown over recent seasons, they are. It is perhaps the appearance of a partial second generation of White Admiral which best illustrates the point. One only has to pick up a butterfly reference book written even as late as the nineties, when the appearance of White Admirals in autumn was such a rare event that it does not even warrant a mention – yet now it is occurring regularly, if not every year. So climate change is a reality and affecting our butterfly populations both locally and nationally, a point I will return to later.

The 2006 season has been a good one for several species. White Admirals (even without the second generation) enjoyed one of their best seasons in recent years. Purple Emperor also did well in the larger woodlands such as Bentley Wood and Alice Holt. In the blue camp, Chalkhills were out in their hundreds on Old Winchester Hill, Adonis Blue continue to expand their colonisation there and the diminutive Small Blue enjoyed a good season with records of close on 100 on Portsdown Hill. Brown Hairstreak also fared well at its two Hampshire sites of Noar Hill and Shipton Bellinger. A couple of migrant species, Clouded Yellow and Painted Lady also enjoyed good seasons and individual sightings of Camberwell Beauty and Long-tailed Blue in the county, and a Large Tortoiseshell just to the west are certainly worthy of a mention. It will only become clear in the next few years if these individual sightings were just isolated instances or the herald of a more sustained migration from the continent.

On the other hand it was a poor year for Duke of Burgundy due to the prolonged spell of rain and wind during May, and Grizzled Skipper continue to decline from woodland sites (but seem to be OK on downland). The Small-pearl Bordered Fritillary poses some cause for concern too. Its sites in Hampshire are generally small and vulnerable (even its strongest site at Bentley Wood) and whilst it had a reasonable season there it fared badly at its other main site in Pamber Forest, with reported sightings only in single figures. There is also no sign of a resurgence of the Small Tortoiseshell's fortunes of which I saw just 2 during the season, nor the Wall Brown which survives in reasonable numbers in Hampshire at just one site (Keyhaven-Lymington nature reserve). Indeed this is the first season where several visits to Portsdown Hill during the season drew a blank for this species, although there have been one or two sightings reported from there by other observers.

For me, personal highlights of the season are usually associated with new experiences – and whilst there aren't many UK resident species I have yet to see (in fact just 2), this season has produced some memorable moments.

- My first visit to Shipton Bellinger, locating Brown Hairstreak without difficulty and watching their behaviour in modest size Ash trees. A welcome change from scouring the hemp agrimony at Noar Hill for them!
- Seeing Dark Green Fritillary in a woodland habitat at Hawkhill in the New Forest
- finding White-letter Hairstreak flitting in elms on Stockbridge Down
- Witnessing the pairing and mating of Marsh Fritillary in Dorset and being watched by a group inquisitive cows and calves as I photographed 'the event'!

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- The sense of achievement of climbing Kidsty Pike in the Lake District (awesome scenery!) to find Mountain Ringlet and obtain my first photos of the species
- Exploring the wilderness of Northumberland's border forest on a baking hot day in early July and succeeding in finding Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (a species which was only discovered in that county about 10 years ago – maybe not surprising since I saw not a single person there in 3 hours of exploration)
- Then there are those species which no matter how many times you see them you never get tired - the majesty of the Purple Emperor, and its impudence when feeding on the ground, occasionally flicking its wings to say "that's close enough", the power and agility of the Dark Green Fritillary's flight or the grace of the White Admiral's - and even the striking underside of the female Brown Hairstreak with its rich orange-brown colour, white hairstreak pattern and dainty little tails – a little beauty!

Climate change is a reality and some of the consequences (partially if not wholly) attributable to it are apparent in the summary above. One might even argue that its good news for butterflies - some species will thrive in the warmer climate (like Adonis Blue) and spread north, more migrants will occur in Britain, perhaps even establishing colonies here and there will be regular additional late summer/autumn generations lasting into October like White Admiral.

However, there are also species where the changing climate is likely to be a factor in their continuing demise. Wall Brown continues to decline, with very few sightings outside the one site in the county where it still holds its own. Grizzled Skippers have virtually disappeared from traditional woodland haunts (perhaps just too wet for the survival of the overwintering pupa?) and are now more or less confined to downland sites. Small Tortoiseshell seems to be doing very badly in SE England and whilst some loss of abundance of nettles as the larval foodplant may be a factor, it is not the only one. Further north too there is evidence that the distribution of Scotch Argus is shifting north to cooler climates and Mountain Ringlet are being forced to higher altitudes. As constraints such as foodplant and nectar availability limit how far these shifts can continue, both these butterflies could be forced out of existence, and sooner than one might imagine. Nationally about two thirds of our butterfly species are in decline - some seriously - and tackling even the existing factors such as habitat loss, pollution and land management is a large enough task without the added burden of climate change, whose insidious consequences are much less well understood. After all, its effects on wildlife are not as instantly visible as turning a greenfield site over to housing development or a motorway for instance.

My view is that, whilst climate change will benefit some species, the loss or accelerated decline of many of our indigenous species as a result of it, is much too high a price to pay. The challenge of climate change is gradually being realised on a global scale and it is to be hoped that the gathering momentum to tackle it will not be a case of - too little, too late.

4 September 2006 - Autumn Beckons!

Decided to checkout activity in my local patch this lunchtime, on Portsdown Hill. With temperatures and strong sunshine more characteristic of midsummer rather than early September, I had a respectable species count of 7 just below Fort Purbrook (Red Admiral, Comma, Speckled Wood, Small White, Meadow Brown, Holly Blue and Common Blue). The Red Admiral and Comma are species which are often very conspicuous during late summer and autumn, basking in the weakening sunshine or feeding on late flowers, berries or rotting fruit.

Photo of today's Red Admiral and Comma posted to 2006 - Active Gallery (Comma photo taken recently at Noar Hill - today's did not stay around long enough!)

27 August 2006 - Plans for "The Quiet Months"

So it's August bank holiday weekend and yet another butterfly season is on the wane. The main flight periods of all Hampshire (and UK) species are now either over or at least past their peak, although there are still a few third generations (e.g. comma, small tortoiseshell!), partial second generations (e.g. white admiral?) and migrants (e.g. clouded yellow) to maintain interest in the occasional outing.

Hence my thoughts are beginning to focus not so much or where to visit next, but on how to continue to develop and build this website, consistent with its objectives, to share my interest in these lovely creatures (by providing a reference source of information), and to help maintain momentum in their conservation, both locally and nationally.

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Visitor hits have been running on average at 5-10 per day, which is respectable for a first season and should represent several times that number in terms of regular visitors, since I assume not everyone visits everyday! So I hope to make it worthwhile to continue to visit the site during the quiet months before next season, perhaps not every week, but maybe a couple of times per month.

Things I intend to do during the quiet period (in addition to sorting out loads of photos!) include:

- Continue to post sightings, but at much reduced in frequency, at least over the next month or so. These are likely to be mainly in S Hants.
- During autumn I intend add a posting on "my reflections from the 2006 season" on the fortunes of Hampshire's butterflies, both positive and negative. Many of the trends in Hampshire are likely to be mirrored in S England and to a lesser extent in UK
- Add a 2006 "bonus gallery" of photos taken during the year which did not quite make it to the site first time round. I will leave the 2006 galleries in tact until the end of the year, when they may be replaced by a single 2006 gallery (a sort of 2006 "showcase") as a reminder of the season's highlights.
- Add a search facility to the site (powered by Google)
- Add features on several more Hampshire Butterfly Sites which I have visited during the season, including two sites in the New Forest
- Migrate some of the best photos I have taken during the year into the main photo galleries arranged by butterfly family
- Maintain the accuracy of the site as a source of reference information, particularly with regard to the presence or abundance of species at specific sites, and their flight periods. It is clear that this is much more variable than I had imagined, with some worrying trends in a few cases.

As before, significant changes will be recorded as an entry on the "What's New" page.

It is also worth indicating at least one thing I do not intend to do, namely to create a discussion forum on the site – there are already excellent ones on the UK butterflies website (see links page) and the ukleps group on yahoo, which have a much wider audience.

However please do continue to use the contact form to ask questions, or send feedback – it's much appreciated, and constructive suggestions for the future evolution of the site will also be welcomed. It has also been enlightening to learn that, as well as regular local visitors to the site, there are also several from much further afield in UK who have contacted me, perhaps because of a planned visit to Hampshire, or to request more info - or just to say they've enjoyed looking!

21 August 2006 - "Brownie" Bonanza at Noar!

The opportunity of an outing this afternoon presented itself unexpectedly and coincided with improving weather - and what an afternoon it proved to be at Noar Hill! In about 2½ hours I saw an amazing 8 Brown Hairstreaks, all but 2 of them females and all but one low down. This is the most I have ever seen on a single visit.

The hotspots today were the triangle and the first chalk pit on the left after the visitor board. Just beyond the apex of the triangle, I saw two females, one searching for egg laying possibilities in young blackthorn, another perched on bramble. In the triangle itself there was another female on blackthorn and two worn males on hemp agrimony (not all at the same time of course). In the first chalk pit, a further two females were flitting around low down, sitting on leaves and briefly opening their wings. A further female (again sitting with open wings at times) was seen high in a hazel tree near the entrance gate.

Since it is close to the end of season I have posted more photos than usual to the active gallery - in fact 8 photos, all of Brown Hairstreaks, with a few light-hearted comments - well it is the end of season!

Other butterflies were seen of course but I was single-mindedly focussed on "brownies" today.

19 August 2006 - Adonis & Co on Stockbridge Down

I visited Stockbridge Down this afternoon, managing to dodge the showers (actually the weather there was very decent!). I spent most of the time in the longer grass at the very bottom of the down close to the western car park where there is a profusion of late summer flowers - and butterflies. Most notable sightings were several male Adonis Blue (first time I have seen them on Stockbridge, although I was aware of records over several years) and 2 Clouded Yellow.

Other species seen in this particular area were Chalkhill Blue (many), Common Blue (several), Brown Argus (3), Small Copper (1), Small Heath (many), Meadow Brown (many), Painted Lady (1), Whites (several) - thus a very decent turnout for a small area of the down. Elsewhere on the down I saw around 10 Silver-spotted Skippers including a mating pair with another solitary male annoying them by following them around and landing "in their face" each time. The skippers were more widely dispersed on the open areas where the grass is shorter. Chalkhills, Meadow Brown and Small Heath were also numerous on these more exposed areas of the down.

I have opened a new gallery (more in hope than expectation as the season draws in) and posted 4 photos to it including a nice Adonis Blue and Clouded Yellow.

18 August 2006 - Return to Beacon Hill

Having visited Beacon Hill (Warnford) on July 26 and failed to find Silver-spotted Skippers, I made a late afternoon return visit today. On the steep escarpment I counted 12 Silver-spotted Skippers in just a few minutes, including one on the path at the top, all in reasonable or even fresh condition, confirming my earlier view that I had just been too early. Chalkhill numbers were reduced from my last visit as their season on Beacon Hill begins to draw to a close.

16 August 2006 - Summer Generation Adonis on OWH

It has been a full week since I have been out and about and I was beginning to get withdrawal symptoms! Still, I guess it's good preparation as the 2006 flight season begins to draw to its close. I can't complain about today's offerings however, as I visited Old Winchester Hill during late afternoon in search of summer generation Adonis Blue. I first headed straight down the slope from the main car park - Chalkhills could be counted by the dozen going down the slope, as well as a few Common Blue - but no sign of the unmistakable electric blue of the male Adonis at this location. I then trudged back up the hill and headed for the other site, through the open gate into a field on the south side of the fort.

This time success! Three male Adonis seen, amongst the Chalkhills and Common Blues towards the more sheltered lower area of the slope. I stayed with one of them as it rested and nectared initially with closed wings, but as the wind dropped, it finally put on its full display for me, with views of those iridescent shades of blue from almost every angle - magic! It is possible there are already Adonis females on the wing amongst the many female Chalkhills but I concentrated only the males today.

I suspect the Adonis Blue will be out soon at the bottom of the car-park slope, but it seems the original site where it was introduced a few years ago by English Nature is the earlier one. Silver-spotted skippers were also present in good numbers (several dozen) at both sites.

4 Adonis photos uploaded to the 2006 Active Gallery.

9 August 2006 - Brown Argus Explosion!

I returned to Noar Hill late afternoon to see if I could add another Brown Hairstreak photo to this year's "album" but only a fleeting glimpse of a male in flight at the far end of the reserve was on offer. The most surprising observation was the large number of Brown Argus on the wing - a mini explosion one might say - particularly towards the far end of the reserve. Although without close inspection, they are easy to confuse with female Common Blue, a count of 20 Brown Argus would be conservative and more than I have seen before at one site. In one area Brown Argus and Common Blue were starting a communal late afternoon roost. I photographed a group of 4 together (2 Brown Argus, 2 Common Blue) and there were several more of each species roosting closeby.

In addition to the "roost", I have also posted an additional photo of a Silver-spotted Skipper I took last week at Old Winchester Hill, but did not use at the time. Only the head area is in focus, but he certainly looks a fearsome little

character! The spines on the middle legs, which are missing from the forelegs, is also a detail one wouldn't normally see. Presumably nature has a reason for this!

6 August 2006 - Last Refuge for the Wall in Hampshire?

Having failed to see any Wall butterflies so far this year (and the first year I have not come across at least one or two on Portsdown Hill), I made the journey this afternoon to the Keyhaven, Pennington and Oxeys marshes, just west of Lymington. This coastal area is more famous for its history (salt extraction) and other wildlife, particularly wading birds and flora rather than as one of the last refuges of the Wall butterfly in Hampshire. Despite the best efforts of the weather forecasters to predict good sunny spells today, the afternoon was rather grey and overcast, so I was delighted to see a total of 6 Wall butterflies, 3 on the lagoon side of the sea wall bordering Pennington marsh, and a further 3 slightly inland along the path by the old tip - perfect "Wall" country! Males and females were in approximately equal numbers and included one very faded male and one fresh female, suggesting the season is close to its peak at present.

It will be a great pity if we lose this handsome species from the county, especially when the reasons for its rapid demise (not only in Hampshire but also many inland counties) are not really understood. Long may it continue to hold its own in this unique coastal area of Hampshire.

As usual with Wall, photo opportunities tend to be brief and you can't be too fussy about composing the shot - nevertheless I managed 2 reasonable photos - both females - posted to the 2006 Active Gallery.

4 August 2006 - Shipton Bellinger & Old Winchester.

Made the journey to Shipton Bellinger in NW Hants this afternoon to visit, for the first time, the county's other Brown Hairstreak site. The site consists of a network of tracks amongst scrub and arable farmland to the west of the village. The tracks are bordered by thick hedgerow containing plentiful blackthorn and bramble, together with mature trees including ash. Brown Hairstreak were active in several of the medium sized ash trees (particularly those along the track running due west) and it was intriguing to be able to observe the behaviour of this elusive species flying amongst the foliage, crawling around the leaves and the finer branches - and just sitting still for minutes at a time doing.....well absolutely nothing! I have never managed to observe this behaviour at Noar Hill. The downside was that none came close enough for satisfactory photography, despite several males and at least two females being seen.

One other notable sighting at this location was a single Small Tortoiseshell. On the way back I called in at Old Winchester Hill. Silver-spotted Skippers are present at the bottom of the main slope (head downhill on entering reserve at main car park) and the south facing slope close to the fort (enter through open gate to left of the track) About 10-12 were seen at each location. Also saw several faded Dark Green Fritillary, many Chalkhill Blue, a Clouded Yellow and common species. Photos of Brown Hairstreak (long range!) and Silver-spotted Skipper posted to 2006 Active Gallery.

1 August 2006 - 2nd Time Lucky with Brown Hairstreak at Noar!

Other commitments this week meant a return visit to Noar Hill in less than ideal conditions - rather cloudy with a blustery wind - at lunchtime today. Nevertheless Brown Hairstreak, true to their unpredictability, made an appearance, albeit just one male. I had scoured the hemp agrimony and brambles on the way from the gate, including a good look around "the triangle" and was beginning to think my luck was out again as I turned into the final chalkpit - and there it was, a solitary male nectaring on the agrimony on the left hand side. It flitted between two or three agrimony heads before doing its jerky zigzag flight back into the trees. Many other butterfly species were seen, similar to my posting of 28 July, however numbers seemed down probably due to the rather poor conditions.

4 photos including 3 of the male "brownie" posted to the 2006 Active Gallery.

28 July 2006 - Brown Hairstreak On The Wing But.....

The good news is that Brown Hairstreak are on the wing at Noar Hill! - so another observer told me early this afternoon (with photos of a male to prove it), having seen 2 near the gate and one in the triangle, all low down.

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The not so good news for me was that an hour and half of searching produced none for me (you get used to it occasionally with Brown Hairstreak!). That said, I did see lots of other butterflies there. In addition to abundant Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and Common Blue, counts of Painted Lady, Red Admiral, Peacock and Silver-washed Fritillary were in the dozens, these nectar loving species making the most of the plentiful marjoram and hemp agrimony. Other species in fewer numbers were Comma, Ringlet, Holly Blue, Brown Argus, Brimstone, Marbled White, other Whites, Speckled Wood, Small Copper, Small Heath and Small/Essex Skipper.

Perhaps the only significant absentee was the Small Tortoiseshell which seems to be having another disastrous season, in this area at least. So Noar hill is a great place to visit at present - and I will see if I can add my own sightings of Brown Hairstreak next week! Photos of Painted Lady, Comma, Peacock and Brown Argus added to 2006 Active Gallery.

26 July 2006 - Beacon Hill, Warnford.

Noting that Silver-spotted Skipper have already been seen in the county (on Stockbridge Down), I made a late afternoon detour to another of their Hampshire sites, Beacon Hill, Warnford. Many species were on the wing on the steep chalk downland escarpment or along the path at the top including Chalkhill Blue, Common Blue, Small Skipper, Gatekeeper, Meadow Brown, Marbled White, the 3 main White species as well as Comma, Peacock, Red Admiral and several very fresh Painted Ladies - but alas it still seems a little early for Silver-spotted Skippers there. The most notable sighting and a fair compensation was a fresh Clouded Yellow which will be a descendant of the spring migration to these shores from the continent. Hopefully better luck next time with Silver-spotted Skipper!

Photo of Clouded Yellow posted to Active Gallery.

23 July 2006 - Hawkhill Revisited.

I made a return visit to the Hawkhill Inclosure in the New Forest this afternoon as the mainly cloudy skies began to give way to decent sunny periods. Along the track running east-west parallel to the stream (called Worts Gutter!) several Dark Green Fritillaries were feeding on the thistles, about half of them females, still looking very attractive despite fading colouration. Silver-washed Fritillaries, including some fresh males occasionally joined in and were also encountered on the way from the car park. A fresh Holly Blue was flitting around a damp area of one of the tracks, stopping to take moisture.

Many other common species were seen including Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper, Small Skipper, Common Blue and Speckled Wood. Bearing in mind White Admiral are also found in the inclosure (although I did not see any today), Silver-studded Blue can be found on the heathland in front of the car park and Grayling are present over the road on Beaulieu Heath, this must be one of the best locations in the forest to see its variety of species. Photos of Dark Green Fritillary and Holly Blue posted to the 2006 Active Gallery.

20 July 2006 - Mid-Evening Butterfly Stroll.

I took a stroll in Whiteley Pastures this evening arriving around 7.30pm as the sun's rays were weakening and the shadows lengthening. Purple Hairstreaks were still active around the tops of the oaks, which were still in direct sunlight, along the right hand side of the main track. Sometimes two or even three could be seen chasing each other from time to time. I counted at least 15 in the first two hundred yards from the gate, which seemed to be the best area. Further on, just before the track becomes much more shaded, two Silver-washed Fritillaries were feeding on bramble and a fresh Comma and Peacock were basking in the same area, soaking up the remaining warm sunshine.

The icing on the cake, so to speak, was a White Admiral in flight, although somewhat the worse for wear, as their season now enters its twilight period. A few Purple Hairstreaks were still flitting in the oak canopy as I approached the gate to leave at around 8pm. So at least 20 butterflies seen of 5 different species and all after 7.30pm - well exceeding my expectations!

19 July 2006 - Browndown Grayling Mystery Solved.

I have frequently come across references to a colony of Grayling on the area known as Browndown North near Lee on Solent, which is "over the road" from the colony I know well on the coastal site of Browndown South (see butterfly sites for location of the latter). In previous years I have made a point of exploring the Browndown North area in search of Grayling just after seeing them on Browndown South - and until this year had failed. Well, a late afternoon visit today solved the puzzle - Grayling are present on the heathery heath of Browndown North which is where I expected to find them.

The explanation for my earlier failures is that they emerge later there than on Browndown South and previous visits have always been very early in the Grayling season. In fact the two sites are barely ½ km apart as the crow flies, but separated by the MoD fence making the real journey much longer. Anyway - mystery solved!

16 July 2006 - Small or Essex Skipper?

The middle of July is a good time to make a closer inspection of areas of rough grassland, meadows and woodland rides which have colonies of those little golden brown darting butterflies called skippers. Whilst in Hampshire (and elsewhere) most are assumed to be Small Skippers, the Essex Skipper, from its headquarters in the SE England, has been gradually expanding its range west and north and I hear has now reached Wales. The Essex Skipper tends to emerge a little later than the Small Skipper, the latter being at peak numbers about now. I have been as guilty as anyone in not paying too much attention to these little butterflies, but whilst visiting an area of Portsdown Hill earlier in the week I took a closer look. At this particular site the majority of Skippers turned out to be the Essex variety, which was a surprise to me.

To tell the difference definitively, you need to look at the underside of the antennae, which in the Essex Skipper look to have had their tips dipped in black paint with a sharp boundary. The upperside antenna in both species is darker towards the tips and more variable, so is not such a reliable test - and beware of shadows giving a wrong impression. I have posted 3 photos to the 2006 - Active Gallery: 1 Small Skipper and 2 Essex Skipper, including a view of the antenna underside.

14 July 2006 - Grayling and Purple Hairstreak in the Forest.

Did some reconnaissance of a couple of New Forest sites this afternoon. First was Godshill, an area of heath towards Fordingbridge. Taking the path from the SW "corner" of the cricket pitch, I soon saw the first Grayling (disturbed from the path). Along the path and making excursions into the heather I saw 10 in all, probably all male. Silver-studded Blue were also present amongst the heather. Good sites in my book have more than one of the less common species, so this makes the grade! Also seen were Small/Essex Skipper, Small Heath, Meadow Brown and a fresh Small Copper close to the cricket pitch.

Then it was on to the Pondhead Inclosure near Lyndhurst, in complete contrast to the heathland area. Pondhead is a mixed woodland area with open glades. Logging operations mean restricted access during weekdays at present, but it's clear this is a good butterflying area. 20 Silver washed Fritillary and 2 White Admirals would have been a successful outcome, but about half a mile down the main track (which eventually leads to other inclosures) I saw a small greyish looking butterfly flitting low down close to the main track. The presence of oaks suggested its identity, which was confirmed as I approached - it was a Purple Hairstreak! It stayed around long enough for a quick photo and even partially opened its wings to reveal it was a male, before ascending to the oaks. Several more could be seen flitting in the canopy. Purple Hairstreaks tend to be most active in late afternoon, and this was about 3pm, so probably the main activity was yet to come.

4 photos posted to the active gallery of Grayling, Small Copper and Purple Hairstreak.

11 July 2006 - 6 - Chalkhills and Gatekeepers on Portsdown.

Made a lunchtime visit to Portsdown Hill today. The Chalkhill Blue season is building nicely with around 20 seen including 2 females which are mainly brown on their upperside. One of the females was unusually small - in fact I had to look twice thinking at first it could be a Brown Argus, which are very scarce on Portsdown. The area favoured by the Chalkhills is close to the entrance (see my site feature) where there is much knapweed in flower. At present Marbled Whites are the most numerous species there but I expect in a week or so the Chalkhills may outnumber them! Further up the hill several Gatekeepers were flitting around low shrubs - all males at this stage.

Sightings of Meadow Brown and few Small Skippers completed a pleasant lunchtime exploration. Photos of Chalkhill Blue and Gatekeeper posted to the 2006 - Active Gallery opened today.

8 July 2006 - Surprises in the New Forest

After my exertions in the Lake District earlier in the week, something gentler was needed today. The New Forest seemed to be the perfect answer, so I selected three locations in the Brockenhurst and Beaulieu areas to make short explorations. The highlights were as follows:

- Pignal Inclosure - 5 Silver-washed Fritillaries, 8 Large Skippers.
- Hawkhill Inclosure - 1 White Admiral and 1 very fresh Dark Green Fritillary (close to stream). There were 4 more seen on the heathland in front of the inclosure, as well as at least 20 Silver-studded Blue.
- Crockford Bridge - Perhaps the best was left to last. Following the track by the stream westwards from the main road and into the thicket, 3 more Dark Green Fritillaries were seen, basking on vegetation or feeding on brambles. Whilst watching one of the Dark Greens feeding, a White Admiral glided in and then another, stopping also to feed on brambles. Bearing in mind this is essentially a heathland site, I was not expecting to see this species here, but White Admirals are having an excellent season. On emerging on the other side of the thicket to the more open heath, Silver-studded Blues began showing and finally a Grayling - my first of the year.

2 Photos of Dark Green Fritillary posted to 2006 - Early Summer Gallery. A new gallery will shortly be opened for the 2006 midsummer period.

5 July 2006 - Fritillaries in Northumberland National Park.

Prior to heading south today, I returned to Wark Forest in the Northumberland National Park this morning. Along the tracks in this remote working forest, I came across 7 Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. Common species seen in better numbers included Small Heath, Large Skipper, Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Green Veined White and Red Admiral. As expected in early July the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries were mostly in faded condition but interestingly one fresh one, close to a sphagnum moss area which is also a site for Large Heath (a damp area!). I did not see any Large Heath on the moss but in Northumberland they should start emerging any day now.

Few people know there are more Large Heath sites in Northumberland than the rest of England and Wales put together (on what are called the 'border mires'). Wark Forest which is part of the vast Kielder Forest, is actually a mosaic of plantations at different phases, cleared areas and mosses, very remote but dramatic in its own way. Once off the forest tracks however, the terrain can be difficult and is definitely only for the serious enthusiast. Photo of Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary (fairly faded!) uploaded to 2006 - Early Summer Gallery.

4 July 2006 - Mountain Ringlet in Cumbria!

I set off early this morning along the Tyne Valley to Cumbria, with the objective to see Mountain Ringlet at a colony on the slopes of High Raise. From the RSPB car park at Haweswater, (which leads into an observation point in Riggindale where England's only Golden Eagle survives), I set off up towards Kidsty Pike, being the first part of the route to High Raise. On the path up the ridge to Kidsty Pike, I saw a small dark butterfly flitting on the slope to the left - IT WAS A MOUNTAIN RINGLET! I saw about 15 Mountain Ringlets in about an hour there, but they are very difficult to photograph, flying almost continuously in the warm sunshine, or nestling amongst the grass stems. I never did make it to High Raise but job done anyway - and by the way - magnificent scenery! Back home to Hampshire tomorrow. Two photos uploaded to 2006 - Early Summer Gallery.

3 July 2006 - 1st Day 'Up North'.

Today has been the first day of a two day visit to the North of England visiting relations and taking in a few interesting butterfly sites. Postings will be brief due to reduced connectivity (and time!). Today visited Wark Forest in Northumberland and saw a few Small Pearl Bordered Fritillaries (well 3 actually). They were only discovered in this county in 1995 and are present in few locations in the forest and moors at very low density. In the afternoon visited Castle Eden Denemouth in County Durham - a site for a local form of the Northern Brown Argus,

sometimes called the Durham Argus. Again 3 seen (expected more but it was late afternoon and cooling down with the sea breeze). Also saw 2 faded Dingy Skippers and a fresh Dark Green Fritillary. Northern Brown Argus photos posted to 2006 - Early Summer Gallery.

2 July 2006 - Purple Emperor - Deja Vu!

Visited Bentley Wood this morning - looked in the visitor's book at the notice board noting that the first Emperor was seen on 28 June, so thought my chances should be good. No activity on the way up the switchback so went to see the W-L Hairstreak elms by the Ralph Whitlock memorial. The centre of activity for these now seems to be the two isolated elms right on the cross track close to the memorial - several WLH seen flitting high in the elms. As for Purple Emperor - my luck was in on the way back - a male down on the main cross tracks, in almost the identical place I saw one two years ago! It had gathered quite crowd before doing a couple of circuits and flying off. Single photo uploaded to 2006 - Early Summer Gallery.

I am currently spending a couple of days in the north of England visiting relations but also hope to see one or two northern species. Technology permitting I will try to keep up to date.

30 June 2006 - Dark Greens and White Letters.

Spent a very enjoyable couple of hours around Pitt Down (Farley Mount Country Park) and Stockbridge Down this afternoon. On Pitt Down I saw 12 Dark Green Fritillaries, mostly very fresh, several in the area in front of the Juniper car park but even more in the part of the down adjoining the next car park to the west. They were very active in the warm sunshine and would not settle for long but I did manage a couple of photos.

Then on a few miles to Stockbridge Down and thanks to Pete Eeles and Mike Duffy, I have discovered not only that there are elms on Stockbridge Down but there is a thriving White-letter Hairstreak colony there. From eastern car park go through smallest gate and follow the track for several hundred yards, then take first right turn (beside 'no riding' sign on post), though another gate. There are several elms along there, not far from the gate. I saw at least 12 White-letter Hairstreak making frequent darting flights in the upper foliage, moving sometimes from one elm to another and several aerial chases. I suspect the colony is at least 20 individuals strong which is a good size. They mostly settled out of sight on the upper surfaces of leaves at least 20ft up and I was beginning to think I would have to make do with an 'in flight' photo. Patience paid off eventually when one did settle in view, albeit about 20ft up but near enough for a clear photo ID. Next time I'll take a longer lens!

Photos of Dark Green Fritillary and White-letter hairstreak (including one in flight!) uploaded to 2006 - Early Summer Gallery.

29 June 2006 - Admirals 'aplenty' in the Pastures!

A lunchtime walk along the main track in Whiteley Pastures produced 12 White Admirals and around 20 Silver-washed Fritillary, including a mating pair. It looks like an excellent season there for White Admirals - I have never seen so many in such a short time. Several White Admirals were making brief stops on the uphill section of the main track seeking minerals/nutrients and a few more on the downhill section over the ridge which was also the main centre of activity for Silver-washed Fritillary. The focus of the Fritillaries has moved further down this section due to logging activities by the Forestry Commission resulting in removal of some brambles and thistles. It was also somewhat ironic that having waited 3 years to get a decent underside photo of a White Admiral - I succeed in a lunch-break! WA and SWF photos - one of each - uploaded to 2006 - Early Summer Gallery.

24 June 2006 - Silver-washed Fritillary in Crab Woodand more.

Visited the Farley Mount Country Park which has both high quality downland (Pitt Down) and excellent mature woodland (like Crab Wood) in close proximity. On Pitt Down. since my last visit a week ago, Marbled White are now on the wing but no other new species - and in particular no sign of Dark Green Fritillary. It seems their emergence is just a few days later than previous years which is no real surprise. My visit to Crab Wood had for its accompaniment of the sound of braying donkeys from a nearby donkey breeds event! No matter - the Silver-washed Fritillaries are on the wing there (5 seen) and were unperturbed by the noise. Indeed they seemed to be on a mission, flying more or less incessantly. I was beginning to think the best photo I was going to get was one perched 10m up in a tree until one landed briefly on bramble and succumbed to the camera.

To complete this posting, a business trip yesterday allowed me to make an en-route lunch stop at Broxhead Common. This beautiful heath was alive with Silver-studded Blues - you know that when you walk a few yards into the heather and see several of them. Photos of Silver-washed Fritillary, Marbled White, Silver-studded Blue (male and mating pair) added to the 2006 Summer Gallery.

23 June 2006 - White Admiral in Whiteley Pastures!

Nothing ventured nothing gained, so after work I made a late afternoon detour to Whiteley Pastures. Several fresh Large Skippers were still active just inside the entrance gate, but the best was still to come. Further along the main track towards the ridge I was rewarded with the sighting of a single White Admiral, its graceful flight definitely making the detour worthwhile. No Silver-washed Fritillaries were seen - indeed their favourite nectar source, thistles, are mainly in tight bud, suggesting the Silver-washed emergence could be still a few days away.

16 June 2006 - Silver-studded Blue on the wing in New Forest.

Beaulieu Heath has one of the largest colonies of Silver-studded Blue in the New Forest and they are on the wing now! I visited only a small area of it today, a few hundred yards north east of the model aircraft flying area where the heathery heath is sheltered by mature gorse bushes. I found 16 fresh Silver-studded Blue there including 2 females. A brief visit to another, damper, area of the heath close to Crockford Bridge, where I have seen them in previous years, produced none today - probably just too early.

On the way back (after aborting a planned visit to the Holmsley Inclosure for Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary, due to a road closure), I made a detour to Pitt Down, west of Winchester. The surprise find there was a Clouded Yellow! - also a fresh Large Skipper and a Meadow Brown and a worn Grizzled Skipper. There were good numbers of Common Blue and Small Heath also present. So all in all, a good afternoons work! Pitt Down should have Dark-green Fritillaries soon, however there seems to be fewer thistles there this year, which they are very fond of, and is not good news for those hoping to photograph this very active and powerful species.

6 photos from today's outing added to the 2006 - Early Summer Gallery.

9 June 2006 - Visit to Beacon Hill, Warnford.

Despite the fantastic weather this week, it's that quiet time of the Hampshire Butterfly season when many of the spring butterflies are nearing the end of their flight periods and the summer generations and species have yet to emerge (eg the large Fritillaries, White Admiral, Purple Emperor etc). For those prepared to travel however, or live elsewhere in UK, now is a good time to see Large Blue, Heath Fritillary, Swallowtail and even Chequered Skipper in their respective locations.

I spent a very pleasant hour after work today on Beacon Hill, Warnford. The exposed steep escarpment is covered in wild flowers including orchids (mainly pyramidal). At the bottom of the slope, where it is more sheltered from the wind, I found Dingy Skipper, Grizzled Skipper, Small Heath, Brown Argus, each in small numbers as well as many Common Blue. It is a very steep descent and the climb back up is even worse, but worth the effort! 4 photos have been added to the early summer gallery to start it rolling.

2 June 2006 - Adonis Blue on Old Winchester Hill (OWH).

On the way back from Bentley Wood yesterday, I made a detour to Old Winchester Hill, with the objective of seeing how the Adonis Blues were doing, having been introduced by English Nature several years ago. The first challenge was to devise a workaround as a result of the road from Warnford being closed (the actual barrier is just a few yards back from OWH car park so the workaround was more or less unnecessary!). I then headed straight down the grassy track past the information shelter, through a wishing gate and down the slope. As the track makes a left turn near the bottom, I saw the first male Adonis, then another and another. In fact, in the area near the bottom of the slope and in the rough meadow on the other side of what used to be a fence (now flattened in places), I counted 14 Adonis Blue including 2 females - along with several Common Blue, 4 Small Heath and one Green Hairstreak (on a mission!).

This showing of spring generation Adonis Blue is really excellent news and gives confidence that this reintroduction will be successful long term. It is not even the original introduction site used by English Nature - that

is on a south facing slope close to the fort, which I did not have time to visit yesterday. In the rough meadow I also saw singletons of both Dingy and Grizzled Skipper, which I had not seen on OWH before. 4 Adonis photos (including a female) are added to the 2006 gallery. A new gallery will be opened shortly for the summer period.

2 June 2006 - Small Pearl-bordered and Marsh Fritillary in Bentley Wood!

Visited Bentley Wood (Eastern Clearing) this afternoon. Made straight for the Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary area at the far eastern end of the Eastern clearing. In about 30 minutes I had estimated there were about a dozen Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries there, most quite fresh and very active in the sunshine, but I did manage some photos. I was also on the look out for Marsh Fritillary, since I had seen one in the same area last year, but a tip-off by another observer said there were a few in the damp area a few tens of yards back towards the entrance - and sure enough he was right. I saw at least 4 Marsh Fritillaries including one by the path down the south side of the clearing. So after several years of precarious existence (i.e. almost extinct) at Bentley Wood, this species seems to be enjoying an upward trend in its fortunes. Since Bentley Wood (and Martin Down) are mentioned in the 2005 Hants & loW branch report as Marsh Fritillary sites, I have decided it is no longer sensitive information to withhold from this website. Hence the species account page, Hampshire Sites page and Bentley Wood feature page have been updated. A Total of 6 photos of Small-Pearl Bordered and Marsh Fritillaries added to 2006 Gallery.

On the way home I called at another site - so look out for a blog on that tomorrow!

1 June 2006 - Noar Hill Dukes make it into June!

Another first for me today - it was the first time I have managed to see Duke of Burgundy in June! Made a whistle-stop lunchtime visit to Noar Hill with a work colleague who had not seen this species before. Managed to see 4 males (all in a bit of a state!) in the far chalk pit. If anyone has not seen Dukes yet, this weekend could be last chance there this season. Photo added to 2006 gallery as evidence.

31 May 2006 - Grizzled Skipper - Woodland Colonies in Hampshire.

Finally managed a short return visit to Botley Wood today in search of Grizzled Skipper. Conditions were rather cloudy and cool, but I would have expected to see few Grizzled Skippers there based on past years experiences. Again I saw none, more or less confirming concerns that numbers there this season have collapsed. It will be great pity if one of Hampshire's few remaining woodland colonies of Grizzled Skipper is going into terminal decline, as other smaller colonies have done in recent years. At least the species seems to be holding its own on chalk downland sites.

28 May 2006 - New Forest.

Made a short visit to the New Forest this afternoon for a circular walk along the tracks in the Perrywood Haseley and New Copse Inclosures close to Brockenhurst. The Standing Hat car park area was thronging (but not with butterflies - only people out enjoying the bank holiday!). Despite being mainly overcast with occasional weak sun, I encountered 20 Pearl-Bordered Fritillaries, almost half of them in an area of regeneration in the New Copse enclosure close to the railway. Most were faded to a greater or lesser extent, however there were one or two fresh ones.

I also spoke briefly to a Forest Ranger who had spotted me with camera - he helpfully directed me to a location where he had seen a mating pair by the track in Perrywood Hazeley Inclosure not long before, but alas I was not able to find them. 1 photo of fresh male added to 2006 Photo Gallery.

25 May 2006 - Marsh Fritillaries (in Dorset!)

Took a chance with the weather this afternoon for an outing into Dorset, to the Butterfly Conservation reserve at Lankham Bottom - the first time I have been there - and it turned out to include of those rare butterfly moments that happen when least expected. The target species for the visit was Marsh Fritillary which are found mainly around the mini coombe on the west side of the reserve. That rare moment was witnessing the brief courtship and mating of a pair of Marsh Fritillaries, an endangered and protected species in Europe as well as UK. Once the male had spotted the resting female amongst the tussocky grass, it fluttered around her for a few seconds,

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"cosied up" for another few seconds, turned himself at right angles and then deftly coupled. They even did a spot of open wing sun-bathing during the process. I left them in peace after about 10 minutes to finish their "important work" for next years generation of these beautiful insects!

I didn't have time to explore the whole of the reserve but it's well worth a visit however I did see 2 Dingy Skippers, 1 Small Tortoiseshell, 1 Peacock and 3 Painted Ladies as well as the Marsh Fritillaries. 2 photos posted to the 2006 Photo Gallery but more will be added at the weekend.

23 May 2006 - Small Blue.

Made a lunchtime visit to the small chalk pit on Portsdown Hill (near Portchester Heights), Small Blue having been reported there already. Sure enough two males were flitting about, looking slightly the worse for wear but having survived the atrocious weather of the last few days. Two photos added to the 2006 Photo Gallery.

19 May 2006 - News of Grizzled Skipper Season in Botley Wood.

It has been a pretty awful week weather-wise for butterfly outings, so I though I'd take the opportunity to ask if anyone had managed to visit Botley Wood (see site feature on Whiteley Pastures) this month and seen any Grizzled Skippers? Botley Wood is one of the few remaining woodland sites for this species in the county and although the species seems to be doing well on downland sites, its future in woodlands seems much less certain.

I made a short visit during the middle of last week to Botley Wood and having failed to find the butterfly, I happened to meet into the transect walker on my way out. At that time it was not clear whether the Grizzled Skipper emergence is just very late there this year or if numbers have collapsed. He reported that only one sighting had so far been reported (on May 1), whereas the species is normally reasonably numerous in several of the rides and rough open areas (counts of 10-20 on a visit were previously not unusual).

I note also in this year's Hampshire Butterfly and Moth Report that transect numbers last year in the wood were about 1/3 of their 2002 levels, which may be an ominous sign, bearing in mind several small woodland colonies in the SE of the county have disappeared in recent years. As our winters seem to be either wetter or colder, the possibility that this species is in serious decline in its woodland sites cannot be overlooked, with the likelihood that global warming is a factor.

14 May 2006 - Bentley Wood.

Visited Bentley Wood this afternoon and spent most of the time in the Eastern Clearing observing the Pearl-bordered Fritillaries. Numbers are building well with 16 seen including several females. Characteristically they were flying low to the ground, stopping to bask with open wings in the weak sunshine. The cool breeze meant an early roost for most of them, with numbers falling fast by 4pm. A visit to Rowley Ponds did not produce any more Pearl bordered Fritillaries, but a Painted Lady did show there. Photos of male and female Pearl-bordered Fritillary posted to 2006 Photo Gallery.

11 May 2006 - Butser Hill.

Paid my first butterfly visit of the year to The Rake area of Butser Hill, including Rake Bottom. The Dukes are out but so far only at the head of the valley called Rake Bottom (8 males seen). 5 Grizzled Skipper on the slopes and 3 Green Hairstreak, 2 around bushes on the valley floor and one at the end of the Rake, close to woodland. The area of the valley which turns north had no Dukes nor Grizzled Skippers, showing how late the season is. 4 photos added to the 2006 gallery.

7 May 2006 - Holly Blue.

Obliging female Holly Blue took up residence in the garden this afternoon. Obviously needed to make sure I hadn't missed any weeds, and was not about to dig up the holly! Couple of pics posted in 2006 photo gallery.

4 May 2006 - Noar Hill (again!)

Made brief stop-off at Noar Hill this afternoon. The belated Duke of Burgundy flight season is at last underway there - saw one fresh male in furthest chalk pit. Photos (perspective and close-up) added to 2006 Gallery. Orange Tips also showing very well, especially along track leading to site.

29 April 2006 - Visit To Noar Hill.

Visited Noar Hill this afternoon. Initially cool and rather cloudy but improving towards late afternoon. Orange Tips were the most conspicuous species with 17 recorded along the track to the gate and on the reserve. The intermittent cloud proved an advantage for photographing the males, as they would settle with closed wings when a thick cloud obscured the sun. Then it was then a case of waiting patiently until the sun emerged again and they would gradually open their wings to the warming rays, before taking wing again. 2 Holly Blues and a Small White were also seen as well as Brimstones, Commas, and Peacocks, but it seems still too early for Duke of Burgundy. This spring is certainly later than recent years - by a couple of weeks by my estimate. 4 Orange Tip photos added to the 2006 Gallery.
